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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING

IN CHARGE OF

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A ROMAN CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

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The hospital contained 400 beds and was staffed by about 30 nuns and 60 infermiere for the care of the children.

We were particularly impressed by two things, there were absolutely no odors in the entire hospital—and many of the children were in bed or had chronic dressings—and the Sister who took us through turned down beds innumerable and there were no accidents. Four of us had known the old Boston Children's Hospital under Sister Amy and felt at home in the Bambino Gesu almost immediately. Cunning little touches,—a shelf for toys over the larger beds, blue and white baby pillows, embroidered stand covers, and fresh flowers everywhere, gave evidences of personal pride and attention and we were not surprised to learn that the family of its founder, Isabella Salviati, maintained an active interest in the hospital and that Queen Elena herself was a frequent, unannounced visitor to its wards.

The youngsters seemed happy and well cared for. The tanned brown faces of some contrasted queerly with the pallor of the new comers for, in addition to the roof-porches, there was a very good yard and the children who could be moved were kept in the open air nearly all day. The hot Italian sun blackens their original brown skin until it seems as if they would never grow light again.

Old Roman buildings did not contemplate screening, and the flies were very troublesome, but some of the beds had mosquito netting. One missed good nursing,—on every side there were evidences of immaculate housekeeping and personal kindness, but that intangible atmosphere which is only produced by the visible results of good nursing observation and care, was lacking, although not as markedly here as in the hospitals for adults that we have visited. The nuns in Italy are such exceptionally good housekeepers that surely they will become as good nurses and teachers when they have been equally well trained along these lines. The average mother is a good mother, but she is not a good nurse, and the American nurses in Italy with whom I have talked have seen nothing over here that makes them feel that Italy's substitutes for our hospital training provide even average nursing for the sick of all classes.

The hospital has just published the report of its first fifty years of service. It was the first hospital exclusively for children in all Italy and was founded in 1869 because Isabella Salviati, the French bride of an Italian nobleman, found two small boys in one bed in a men's ward. Shocked that no better provision could be made for little children, she used a birthday gift from her husband and children, to rent and equip a small house on the left bank of the Tiber. The first building had six beds and was in charge of a Sister of Charity. The doctor visited once a day. Later, the hospital moved into a larger building that had room for 32 beds. In 1881, rebuilding along the Tiber necessitated a third change and the Mayor of Rome offered, for a very small rent, the present site on the Janiculum.

The charge is only nominal to families able to pay. Poor children less than seven years old are paid for from the funds of the Congregazione di Carità, children over seven are supported from provincial funds. All other expenses are borne by the Salviati family. The hospital has a very good contagious disease record; in a comparatively recent cerebro-spinal epidemic, all the cases in Rome under twelve were sent there and nearly all recovered. It cared for 300 cases of influenza during the epidemic of 1918, was one of the first hospitals to offer beds to the earthquake sufferers in 1914, and has won a deserved place in the affections of the Romans because of its very excellent work.

It has a branch hospital by the sea, given by the Queen, and cares for 80 cases of bone tuberculosis there.

When the very complete little ambulator (dispensary) is finished, we hope that some of our students may do social service work in it, for there is a wonderful opportunity here, as everywhere else, for good coöperation between the home, the hospital, the school and the child's ultimate life-work. Now, no home investigation nor follow up work is done.

TWO HOSPITALS FOR THE INSANE

On July 5, we visited the "Manicomio Provinciale," or the Hospital for Mental Diseases of the Province of Lazio, in which Rome is situated. The new buildings are on Monte Mario, a large, fairly high hill, on the outskirts of Rome. We were trying to place a patient, a little woman of refinement and no means, one of those pitiful cases that so many visiting nurses try in vain to handle well. We took a carrozza, for the day at eight was hot and the distance great. We are having a very delightful, unusual summer, but on a really hot day the sun is overwhelming. Even the black glasses that are very commonly worn are little protection from the piercing, strong, white sunlight.

Our way took us down through the Piazza del Popolo, past an obelisk that was old when Christ was born, out through the old Flaminian Gate and straightway into a very modern section where everything—houses, churches and cinema-theaters—was new. Italians have a curious way of criticising everything modern; consequently I was not surprised to hear my young guide speak most condescendingly of the quarter as a place where “*impiegati*” (clerks) and their families lived, quite reasonably. “But is it not ugly?” she added, frankly. Tastes differ.

Few nurses find beauty in the damp rooms of some of the old dwellings in Rome, however quaint, ancient, or picturesque the narrow insanitary streets may be; and these wide, clean, sunny streets and houses that looked as if they held modern plumbing, seemed not too utterly hideous. There is a fearful sameness in street after street of these big, square, yellow stuccoed structures, but when one does not know the history, there is a worse sameness about the older streets, for they are almost invariably chill and damp, and the lines of clothes flapping along the house-walls, below the windows, make one wonder how people even try to be clean when they are housed so badly. In Genoa and Naples the streets are even more narrow, and there are many rooms that can never get a ray of sunlight. Such streets may interest or disgust the tourist, but they are bad for babies no matter how much they may charm the writers of guide-books.

As we left this quarter and turned up the hill, we passed a few tumble-down houses that are always present to mark the change from urban to rural life. Such shanties seem indigenous to all soils, but only in France, where I could not see their interiors, did they appear picturesque. Thatched roofs, when one does not live under them, suggest primitive comfort rather than extreme poverty.

We were looking for the new buildings of the Manicomio of San Onorfrío on the Janiculum, but by mistake were driven first to a private “*Casa di Salute*.” At the top of a sharp hill, much too steep for the horse, we found an attractive yellow stucco house, set in a large garden entirely surrounded by a high, wire fence. Palm-trees, stone pines and big clumps of tall oleander bushes, covered with large pink blossoms, gave a distinctly tropical aspect to the very well-kept grounds. Once inside, however, we found that the many trees surrounding the house made the first floor dark and gloomy. We were not expected, which surprised us, for a physician had telephoned that we were coming, but we were cordially received and taken through by a woman who seemed to be in charge of the patients and the house-keeping. The doors leading to the patients’ corridor were without door-knobs and were always opened by keys. After we had entered,

the door behind us was locked. Every patient had a private room, a small affair, with a comfortable bed, but very little furniture. The billiard-room, veranda and garden were pleasant but deserted. There was nothing to suggest therapeutic occupation of any sort, although there were plenty of attendants. We were told that the patients paid from 24 lire (\$3) a day, up; that the institution was very exclusive, and always had a long waiting list. We knew that our patient could not pay so much, although the gentle, kindly treatment that was indicated on every side made us long to put her there.

From there we drove to our real destination; constantly up hill, by a road that wound past high stone walls and fields of grain, beautiful villas and farm laborers' houses,—in fact, the country scenes and scents made it hard to believe that Rome was less than three miles away.

We arrived at the Manicomio, just at twelve, a very inconvenient hour, for guests are never taken into the patients' dining-rooms. Company always excites them. We were very warm and the cool shade of the long, stone corridors and pleasant waiting-room was a grateful refuge from the blazing noon-day sun. It did not make us any cooler, however, to discover that we might have taken a bus from the Piazza Venezia, or a tram, and have made the trip more quickly and comfortably. The director was leaving, but he took time to show us a model of the institution as it will be when completed. It is to provide for the needs of all patients in the province, and is built on the pavilion plan. There are wards for men and for women, for the tuberculous, for infectious diseases and for the criminal insane. In one corner is to be a farm colony. The tract of ground seemed very large and over one thousand patients will be taken. We were shown the theatre where moving-picture entertainments are given; and the library, a pleasant, well-equipped room. We were taken through the kitchen and store room. The kitchen was almost unbelievably clean, more like the show kitchen of a big New York hotel than the kitchen of a public institution. This pavilion had its own cold-storage plant. It was not screened, but as it was darkened, there were few flies.

We went through one pavilion for women. It was a long, one-story building with wards on either end of a central sitting-room, as yet scantily furnished. Behind, in a wired-in yard having several good shade trees, were about forty women. There were too many patients for the building, but the Sister explained that this was because the other buildings were not quite ready.

The women were dressed in somewhat depressing dark blue gingham, and ranged from rather nice gentlewomen to old, withered hags who seemed like street beggars. They were classified by disease

and condition, and not by personal characteristics, consequently it was difficult to pay any special attention to women of refinement, but constant association with some of the poor, demented creatures must have had a very undesirable effect on the more hopeful cases. One girl, under twenty, recovering from the effects of post-influenza depression, seemed obviously out of place. All looked very well cared for.

The Nuns of St. Catherine of Siena are in charge of the nursing and housekeeping, and they seemed unusually efficient and kind, but the mingling of really offensive street types with women unaccustomed to such exposure was deplorable. The building and equipment, as far as we could see, left nothing to be desired and the whole plant was decidedly on a par with our own good institutions. Plans are under way for occupational therapy for all the patients and special workshops are being equipped.

It was two o'clock when we reached Rome again and we were hot, thirsty and undecided. Obviously there was no better place for our poor patient, but how she would hate it!

In its fight against cancer, the American Society for the Control of Cancer, has issued a bulletin containing, in part, the following points: During the Great War the United States lost about 80,000 soldiers, and during the same two years 180,000 people died of cancer in this country. Cancer is frequently curable, if recognized and properly treated in its early stages. It begins as a small local growth which can often be entirely removed by competent surgical treatment. It is not a constitutional or blood disease. It is not communicable, and it is not possible to "catch" cancer from anyone who has it. It is not inherited, and there is much needless worry about inheriting the disease. The beginning of cancer is usually painless and for this reason its insidious onset is frequently overlooked. Every persisting lump in the breast is a warning sign. In women continued unusual discharge or bleeding requires the immediate advice of a competent doctor. Do not expect the doctor to tell you what is the matter without making a careful physical examination. Any sore that does not heal, particularly about the mouth, lips or tongue, is a danger signal. Picking, irritating or treating such sores by home remedies, is playing with fire. Go first to your family physician.